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THE SOLIDITY OF TRUE RELIGION.

AND OTHER SERMONS PREACHED IN LONDON DURING
THE GENERAL ELECTION AND MISSION WEEK,
FEBRUARY 1874.

BY

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I.

LAY HELP IN LONDON.

PHILIPPIANS IV. 3.

AND I ENTREAT THEE ALSO, TRUE YOKEFELLOW, HELP
THOSE WOMEN WHICH LABOURED WITH ME IN THE
GOSPEL; WITH CLEMENT ALSO, AND WITH OTHER
MY FELLOW-LABOURERS, WHOSE NAMES ARE IN
THE BOOK OF LIFE.

21

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL, ON THURSDAY
EVENING, FEBRUARY 5, 1874, BEFORE THE AS-
SOCIATION OF LAY HELPERS FOR THE DIOCESE
OF LONDON.

LAY HELP IN LONDON.

WE have here a lively picture of Lay Help as it was in Apostolical times.

Of all the actors in this busy scene, there is no proof that any one, except the Writer, was an "ordained" person in our sense of that word. Who is addressed under the endearing title of St. Paul's "true (genuine) yokefellow," we know not. If Epaphroditus, the bearer of the letter—who seems, perhaps, most naturally designated by it—he is, indeed, called in the Greek the "apostle" of the Philippians;¹ but it is clear from the context that the word "apostle" has in that place only the meaning given to it in

¹ Phil. ii. 25 : ὑμῶν δὲ ἀπόστολον.

our English Version, of "emissary" or "messenger." Epaphroditus had been sent by the Philippian Church with pecuniary supplies, tokens of their loving devotion, to the imprisoned Apostle at Rome.¹ St. Paul calls him his "brother, and companion in labour, and fellow-soldier :²" but a comparison of like expressions in other parts of St Paul's writings will make it doubtful whether any one of these titles can be regarded as positively ascribing to Epaphroditus a partnership in the Ministry, as distinguished from the service, of their common Lord.³

Even Clement—though the name has sug-

¹ Phil. iv. 18.

² Phil. ii. 25.

³ The term "fellow-soldier" is of too rare use (occurring only in Philemon ii. besides) to furnish a decisive argument either way.

gested to some readers of Church History associations with Ecclesiastical and even Episcopal office—was yet, in all probability, not the illustrious Clement of Rome,¹ but a Philippian, by birth or residence, and, if so, may with equal likelihood have been either a Minister or a Layman. He is mentioned only as one among many “fellow-labourers” of St. Paul; and it would be a gratuitous and improbable assertion that all these were, in the technical sense, either Presbyters or Deacons.

But the clear words of the text carry us one step further. Women also are among these fellow-toilers with St. Paul in the Gospel. And

¹ See a detached note on “Clement my fellow-labourer,” in Dr Lightfoot’s Edition of St Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians, page 166.

here too it would be a narrowing and cramping idea to imagine Church Officers, Deaconesses, to be spoken of. Whether, indeed, such an office had place in the Church of the Apostles, is still, I must think, an open and a very doubtful question. To import the mention of it into this passage would be entirely fanciful. St. Paul is speaking of two women, whose names are given in a verse above, and who appear to have fallen into disunion and discord with each other, which he here laments and would heal. He recognizes these two women, notwithstanding their fault in this matter, as fellow-Christians and fellow-toilers with himself still. It is as fellow-Christians that they are fellow-toilers.

Then, finally, the particular "help" to which he

here invites both his "yokefellow" and Clement and the rest, is one which has nothing Clerical, nothing Ministerial, in its nature. The original, if not the English text, makes this certain.¹ He bids all these friends to join in the reconciliation of Euodia and Syntyche. Help them, he says, in the difficult work of becoming friends again. Help them, for they are worthy. They laboured with me. They joined their efforts and their struggles with mine in the Gospel of our blessed Lord.

Whether then we look at the persons addressed, or at the persons described, or at the special help which the one is asked to render

¹ *συνλαμβάνον αὐταῖς, αἵτινες κ.τ.λ.* cannot be "Help those women who," &c., but must be rendered, "Help them"—the two women just mentioned—"persons who," or "seeing that they," &c.

to the other, we have before us a most practical, a most instructive comment upon the work in which you, friends and brothers, are engaged at this time in the Diocese of London, and upon which we are gathered together, all of us, this evening, to invoke that Divine benediction and guardianship, without which builder and watchman, Pastor and Helper, "lose their labour," and "wake in vain."¹

Nothing can be more certain to the student of Scripture, yet nothing was more utterly forgotten in the Church of England half a century ago, than that He who bought us with His most precious blood designed us all to be His Ministers and His Priests, offering up to Him, day by day, not only—though this is the first thing—

¹ Psalm cxxvii. 1, 2.

the sacrifice of a pure and devout life, but also that other sacrifice, springing out of this, which may be briefly described as the service of Him in the service of His people.¹ The idea that all offices of piety and charity were to be heaped upon the Clergy ; that it was unnecessary for a man, unless he were ordained—unnecessary, or even presumptuous—to “put his hand to the plough” of Christian labour, either for the poor, or for the young, or for the erring, or for the outcast—is so directly opposed to every principle, to the very life, of the Gospel, that St. Paul, if he had lived to look upon it, would assuredly have withered and scathed it by one of his terrible interrogations, “Know ye not that ye are God’s temple ?²” or, “Unto what then were ye

¹ Rom. xii. 1. 1 Pet. ii. 5, 9.

² 1 Cor. iii. 16.

baptized?¹” He would have begun to “teach us again the very first principles” of the Christian system²—how Christ called us not only to an individual but to a corporate life; formed us into a body, having many members, each with its office—one for oversight, one for command; one for “willing,” one for “running³”—all equally helpful, equally useful, equally essential.⁴ If the foot should say, Because I am not the hand, I am not wanted; or the ear, Because I am not the eye, I may lie idle, I shall not be missed; where would be the efficiency even of the more honourable parts, and where the comfort, the harmony, the very movement and action, of the whole?

¹ Acts xix. 3.

² Heb. vi. 12.

³ Rom. ix. 16.

⁴ Rom. xii. 4, 5. 1 Cor. xii. 12, &c. Eph. iv. 4, &c.

It is a subject of just congratulation, though full, at the same time, of thoughts of sorrow and sadness, that the Church of this Diocese has been aroused in these latter days to a truer feeling of the place of Christian men and Christian women—as Christians—in the Body, in the Temple, which is the Church, of God. Starting, like all such revivals, from a comparatively small beginning, we witness to-night a remarkable growth. Seven years have sufficed, under God's good hand, to multiply twenty-fold this particular Association:¹ and we cannot doubt that a work so truly representative of the idea of Christ's Gospel has in it the secret of life, and will go on to develop new energies in new

¹ In 1867 the Association numbered 90 members : in 1873 it numbered 1850.

fields of action—heart kindling heart with the fire of a sympathy at once Divine and most human, to the glory of the One Lord, and to the strengthening and comforting and edifying of His people.

1. It is quite needless, in this audience, to dwell at any length upon the advantages of association in stimulating, directing, and economizing labour.

Multitudes of men and women stand idle in the Church's market-place, and give as their excuse that "no man hath hired them."¹ That excuse never, indeed, had any truth in it as regards the individual, or rather the spiritual, hiring. Creation, Redemption, Baptism, Communion, Providence, Conscience, the Gospel, the

¹ Matt. xx. 7.

Spirit—any one of these is enough to silence the plea that God has no call for us. But I speak now of a different application of the figure of that Parable. A man, I will suppose, had become conscious of God's interest in him. He had, whether at the third or at the sixth hour, received with the soul's ear the summons to go into the Vineyard—understanding by that call the invitation to conversion and holiness. In his heart there began now to work, more or less strongly, the new hopes and desires of a Christian. In particular, he felt one question stirring within him, "What shall I do, Lord?"¹ He asked it of himself—he asked it of his Minister—he asked it of his friend. *What can I do for Him who has done all for me? What*

¹ Acts xxii. 10.

work is open to me? I have leisure, I have strength, I have the will. I tremble lest want of work for Christ should leave me desultory, purposeless—at last inconsistent, worldly, sinful. I want that which shall fix me, pledge me, bind me, compel me, to my new service. “There was no voice, nor any to answer.” There was no nucleus of good, to which good might gather. There was no formed, defined, animate body for the young man to seek and to coalesce with, in his desire not to fall back and not to fall away. The principle of association—and is not that, indeed, the very idea of a Church?—meets this want. There is now, in this roll of 1879 fellow-workers, something to guide the steps of the new enquirer; assuring him of sympathy, assuring him of direction, assuring him of help.

Each one of those Associates is like the rope thrown out to the new struggler with the waves of this Ocean of London, to draw him towards that Ark of Christ's living and acting Church, in which he may feel himself never at a loss and never alone.

I trust that this will become more and more the thought and the endeavour of the several separate Members of this Association. The very name is a charm. Loneliness in feeling is melancholy: loneliness in working is paralysis. How shall I, a forlorn stranger in this vast City, discover for myself—whatever my desire for it—my mission and my commission for Christ's poor and Christ's prodigals? I may do harm, I can scarcely do good—I may incur harm, I can scarcely get good—if I start alone, without

direction, to seek for myself a field and an object. I may find, after long labour, not only that I have "taken nothing,"¹ but perhaps that I have been spending superfluous toil upon a spot already cultivated, already planted and sown, without my knowledge, by some one else. On one plot of ground two men or twenty men are at work, elbowing, jostling, counteracting each other; while hard by there is an absolute destitution of workmen, hearts failing for lack of help, and none to say to me, *There, not here!*

In combination of labourers is division of labour—and without such division no work can prosper.

2. We cannot but be struck, again, as the

¹ Luke v. 5.

plans of the Association enlarge themselves, with the wonderful variety of the agencies which it offers to the choice of its workmen. We count nothing too small to be reckoned, and nothing too secular to be consecrated, when the thing has to do with Christ's Church : whether it be the instruction of the young and the ignorant in Sunday or Night School—or the visiting of "a few sick folk"¹ with the consolations of the Gospel—or the use of ear and voice in Church Music—or even the placing of the worshippers, in order and quietness, for the enjoyment of "the Word of God and prayer"²—or even the equipment of the Church itself, at festive seasons, so that the very walls and vessels of service

¹ Mark vi. 5.² 1 Tim. iv. 5.

shall preach to the eye the hopes and the joys which God has revealed in His Christmas and Easter and Whitsuntide revelations. There is room for all and more than all these in the helpful offices of this Lay Ministry : and it is not the least part of its value, that it does not bid all alike, fit or unfit, to rush into one (and that perhaps the highest) kind of service, but says to each of its members, Choose what you will—that which you judge to be most suitable to your gifts, or best proportioned to your present “measure of faith :¹” only do it with good will, of a free heart, as unto Christ, and it shall be accepted, both in kind and in measure, “according to that you have, and not according to that you have not.”² From a lower you may pass, as

¹ Rom. xii. 3.

² 2 Cor. viii. 12.

time advances, to a higher form of service—"they that have well used" the humblest, "purchase to themselves a good degree," and increased boldness in the work that is for Christ Jesus.¹

One of these higher works deserves special notice, both for its novelty and for its importance. It is a sign of the developing grace of this Association, that it is now boldly entering the Mission-field of London; lending itself here and there, for definite periods, to Parishes of peculiar spiritual destitution, for a hand-to-hand conflict, in their darkest and foulest dens, with the demons of vice and unbelief and ungodliness. There, in little bands of earnest, manly, sober-minded soldiers of the Cross and the Crucified,

¹ See 1 Tim. iii. 13.

this Association is fulfilling its chosen work and office of the Helper, by drawing souls to Christ, and making His Church felt as a reality where its very name, where the name of its Divine Lord, was not so much as named. Not for one week alone of marked and eager wrestling, but as the business of week after week, and year after year, while life lasts and grace is given, this Association calmly and unobtrusively holds and works its Mission : and God, by it, is strengthening greatly the hands of His ordained ministers, and “adding daily to the Church,” we dare to hope, “such as shall be saved.”¹

3. And in all this manifoldness of working the saying is remarkably verified, “He that watereth shall be watered also himself.”² There is a

¹ Acts ii. 47.

² Prov. xi. 25.

reaction of good, not least, upon the workman. It is a great thing to see for ourselves things of which we have idly read in books—realities of want and sorrow, so light in the abstract, so heavy in the enduring: to be brought face to face with destitution, alike of bread and of the Word:¹ to be shamed out of our loitering, and out of our luxury, and out of our listless, dreamy, self-indulgent intellectualism, by being shown what earth is to the bulk and to the average of her children: to be constrained to lend a hand, if it be but a weak and unsteady hand, to the support of the tottering and the palsied: to be enabled at last to feel that in one little part (at least) of our day and of our life we are decidedly on the side of good, which is the side of Christ: to

¹ See Amos viii. 11.

be pledged to this side and to this service : to be “known and read of all men¹”—flesh and blood may shrink from it—humility as well as cowardice might say, “Have me excused”—but to be “known and read of all men” as bound by the double *Sacramentum*, first of Communicants, then of Associates. Something of that which a Clergyman finds in his title and in his dress, as a help to self-recollection and to consistency, may you feel, beloved brethren, as you read your names in this printed list of Association—may it be indeed the true type, in each instance, of that “book of life” of which the text tells—or bend your steps to Abbey or Cathedral for these solemn Services of renewed and reiterated dedication.

¹ 2 Cor. iii. 2.

It is a great thing, moreover, to feel that, however small in comparison with conflicting or neutralizing influences, there is yet abroad in this monster Metropolis, such a salt and leaven of good as is implied in eighteen hundred men, of all ranks and powers, yet in the fulness of life and vigour, mingling in common society with the mark of Christ's workers, of the Church's helpers, upon them. It secures this—that, to that extent at least, and to the extent of all whom they influence, there shall be no word spoken in disparagement of Christ and His Church; no taunting or slighting tone used in reference to things holy and heavenly; no infidel innuendo, no ungodly scoff, no libertine jest uttered, without meeting, on the instant, one person to whom it is as insulting as it is

disgusting. Your work, your engagement, binds you to be Christ's everywhere and all through—to carry the light of an honest Christian confession whithersoever you go. God multiply yet a hundred-fold the number, the influence, and the seed sown!

It is natural then to urge you, in the name of your chosen Master, to enlarged efforts, to deepened convictions, and to quickened prayers for grace. The moment this agency, or any agency for good, looks off from Christ—"stands apart" (as Scripture expresses it), in any one of its workmen, "from the living God"¹—that moment its strength is weakness, its grace corruption, its life death. In God's House, on this calm night, in the prospect of a week full of

¹ Heb. iii. 12: ἐν τῷ ἀποστῆναι ἀπὸ Θεοῦ ζῶντος.

solemnity¹—it may be, for some, of transition from death unto life—let us review our position, as in Christ's presence, and go forth humbler, more earnest, more resolved men! Why should not each one of these eighteen hundred men undertake to add to himself, from without, one new comrade? Why should not the Association thus double itself yet again before another Anniversary? Such a band of men—resolute, grave, devoted—might change the face of a Diocese. Not by self-glorifying; not by much talking; not by unmannerly questioning; not by forcing Christ in where His own parable of “the dogs and the swine” forbids it;² not by narrowing His Kingdom to one section or

¹ The “London Mission” began on Sunday, February 8, 1874.

² Matt. vii. 6.

party ; not by any thing which considerateness, which propriety, which good taste—all of them God's gifts as truly as faith and earnestness and decision are so—would refuse and shrink from ; but by humility, by meekness, by good example, “by pureness, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned¹”—so let us make our way. At last—soon to each one, if not soon to the world—He that cometh will come, and will not tarry.²

And when He cometh, what shall He find us doing? Could we desire a better, a more glorious, a more Divine title for a life human, than that of “Helper?” It is the highest honour of saints. “Salute Urbane, our helper in Christ.³” It is the chosen title of the Apostle. “Helpers

¹ 2 Cor. vi. 6.² Heb. x. 37.³ Rom. xvi. 9.

of your joy.¹” “Fellow-helpers to the truth.²” Nay, One greater than the Apostles has made it His own office. “The God of thy father, who shall help thee.³” “Grace to help in time of need.⁴” “The Spirit helpeth our infirmities.⁵” Even such is your work. Let “Helper” be written in your face: “bind it for a sign upon your hand: ⁶” let it breathe in your words, let it be the music of your footsteps. So shall you carry Christ with you, in His attraction for a living, loving, suffering, sinning, dying humanity. So, through you, bearing His likeness, shall He, by the magnet of His Cross, draw men unto Him.⁷

¹ 2 Cor. i. 24.³ Gen. xlix. 25.⁶ Deut. vi. 8.² 3 John 8.⁴ Heb. iv. 16.⁷ John xii. 32.⁵ Rom. viii. 26.

II.

THE ANXIETY OF THE
CHURCHES.

2 CORINTHIANS XI. 28.

THAT WHICH COMETH UPON ME DAILY, THE CARE
OF ALL THE CHURCHES.

PREACHED IN THE CHAPEL ROYAL, ST JAMES'S, ON
SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 1874; AND
AFTERWARDS IN THE CHAPEL OF KING'S COLLEGE,
LONDON.

THE ANXIETY OF THE CHURCHES.

THE word rendered "care" is not "charge" but "anxiety."¹ It is the same word by which our Lord in the Gospel for this day² designates one of the three "stifling" influences by which the good seed sown in the heart is prevented from reaching maturity. "Choked with cares (anxieties)" as effectually as with "riches or pleasures of this life."³ St. Paul, in the Epistle, speaks of himself as beset day by day with a kind of anxiety which can be named in a

¹ Ἡ μέριμνα πασῶν τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν.

² Luke viii. 4—15.

³ Ὑπὸ μεριμνῶν καὶ πλούτου καὶ ἡδονῶν τοῦ βίου πορευόμενοι συμπνίγονται.

list of sufferings for Christ's sake and the Gospel's. That anxiety which Christ reproved in the Sermon on the Mount,¹ and in the more private converse of the house in Bethany,² has a namesake which ranks among graces. St. Paul himself who says to the Philippians, "Be anxious about nothing,"³ yet, in the enumeration of his own trials as a Christian, of his own sufferings as an Apostle, mentions this, without apology, as his daily experience—"the anxiety of all the congregations."

Just in proportion to the meanness of the one anxiety, is the dignity of the other. The anxieties which choke the Word are commonly

¹ Matt. vi. 25, &c. : μή μεριμνᾶτε τῇ ψυχῇ ὑμῶν κ.τ.λ.

² Luke x. 41 : Μάρθα, Μάρθα, μεριμνᾷς καὶ τυρβάζῃ περὶ πολλὰ.

³ Phil. iv. 6 : μηδὲν μεριμνᾶτε.

as selfish as they are earthly. With Divine intuition does our Lord perceive in these an influence profane and debasing, like that which all acknowledge to be the natural tendency of luxury and dissipation. The country Pastor confronts it, in one form, in the house of his poorer Parishioner, who says, "Occupied from dawn to midnight with the cares of a burdened and straitened household, I have no time to worship, and no heart to be religious." It has a disguise equally common, and more natural to members of a Congregation like the present. "Public, political, official engagements throng me and press me, leaving me no leisure so much as to sleep. I pray thee, have me excused from an attention, at this moment impossible, to the concerns of the soul and eternity." Christ says,

The good seed cannot thrive upon apologies : excuses may be plentiful and plausible, but the soul may starve in the midst of them : if earth holds the heart, it matters little whether it be with a chain of gold or with a rope of hemp. "One thing is needful"—that the soul be right with God, that the eye be set upon Heaven, that the life be Christian, that the death be blessed ; whatsoever prevents or hinders this "cometh of evil"¹—and the anxieties of this world, not only its riches and pleasures, are undeniably in league against it.

Yes, that Gospel which "came not to destroy, but to fulfil"²—not to revolutionize, but to recreate—not to form a new being, but to transform the existing man after God's likeness ; has

¹ Matt. v. 37.

² Matt. v. 17.

a place and a work for every faculty and for every feeling and for every affection of our nature ; for fear and hope, for vehemence and gentleness, for anger and love, for anxiety itself amongst them. There is an anxiety of which only Christian men are capable, and which is at once intense, and elevating, and most practical. St. Paul was full of it.

St. Paul's life, and St. Paul's mind, are two of the most sacred heirlooms of the Church Universal. The one is sketched for us, in mere outline, with enormous breaks and chasms, in the biography written by his friend and often companion St. Luke. The other is unbosomed to us, most unintentionally, most unconsciously, by himself. St. Paul's letters, if they were not in the Bible, associated therefore with thoughts

which the world loves to postpone, would certainly be recognized, by all students of antiquity, as incomparably the most curious, the most peculiar, the most thoughtful and profound, of all the remains of human literature and genius. There is but one possible way of assailing this witness—Festus hit upon it—"Paul, thou art beside thyself."¹ Enthusiasm is a charge easily brought, difficult of confutation. Men do not wait to reflect upon the nobleness of the name²—which is, in other words, "the having God in us"—nor upon the rationality of *his* fanaticism who found in it a strength, as well as a courage, which has not only moved a world, but created a Christendom.

¹ Acts xxvi. 24.

² *Ἐνθουσιασμός*, inspiration, possession by the Deity.

The passage before us is one of the most characteristic paragraphs of St. Paul's Epistles. All the fire, all the passion, all the rush and force, all the pathos too and sympathy, of his nature, here breathe and exhaust themselves. Those rapid transitions, from command to entreaty, from self-assertion to apology, from vehemence to softness, from indignation to grief, which make his writings at once so difficult and so attractive to the student, are here exemplified to perfection. That marvellous use of irony, which less natural, less real men, might shrink from as unchristian—but which he, regarding rhetoric itself as one of God's gifts to be used vigorously (in its place) for the Giver—here reaches its climax. I could wish that time and place permitted

the endeavour to illustrate and to apply the remark.

At last, in what he himself calls the "foolishness of boasting"¹—driven to it by taunts which were disparaging his very place as their Apostle—he tells these Corinthians, for once, the story, in brief, of his sufferings, up to that time, in the service to which he was consecrated. The enumeration shows us how imperfect, how fragmentary, is St. Luke's narrative. Two verses of this day's Epistle make us feel how little, after all, we know of that wonderful life. "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep." Not one

¹ 2 Cor. xi. 16, 17. xii. 11.

Jewish scourging, *but* one Roman—not one shipwreck, no “night and day in the deep,” prior to the date of this Epistle—just the one stoning—this is the sum of St. Luke’s memoranda, set side by side with the record of the confessor himself.

He goes on with more general items, of perils and journeyings, of watchings and fastings, of “cold and nakedness;” and then turns abruptly, without regimen or construction, to the very different topic of the text. “Beside those things that are without”—that is, that are omitted in the enumeration—there is “that which cometh upon me daily, the anxiety of all the congregations.¹”

¹ Χωρὶς τῶν παρεκτός, ἡ ἐπίστασις μοι ἡ καθ’ ἡμέραν, ἡ μέριμνα πασῶν τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν.

St. Paul's Diocese was scarcely local. The Apostolical Office differed essentially from the Episcopal. It was a moving, roving, Missionary Office. St. Paul himself tells us the principle of its definition, when he declares himself the Apostle of all regions of which he was the Evangelist.¹ He never built upon another's foundation.² If St. Peter, if St. John, if St. Andrew, had been beforehand with him in reaching any city or island or continent with the glad tidings of Jesus, he saw the Divine hand in that anticipation, and "assuredly gathered³" that that place or that country was no part of his Province.

But wherever he was the first to preach Christ, there he claimed Apostleship. The "Congre-

¹ 2 Cor. x. 13—16.

² Rom. xv. 20, 21.

³ Acts xvi. 10.

gations" of which he here speaks were bodies of Christians, gathered from among Jews or heathens in the various towns which he had evangelized. The anxiety, the distraction, arising from these, is that crowning agony, over and above stripes and prisons and stonings, of which he leaves the record here, in writing to that Church of Corinth which contributed a large part of it.

We have then before us an anxiety which, instead of "choking" the Word, grew out of it. St. Paul, who was entirely free from anxieties of riches and pleasures and cares of this life, was by that very abstraction made capable of others. Of these others the first peculiarity is, that they were absolutely unselfish. These people were nothing to him. They were not kinsfolk, not

neighbours, not even countrymen. Seven years ago, he had never seen Philippi: six years ago, he had never seen Corinth: five years ago, he had never seen Ephesus. These strangers, ever multiplying upon his hands as he passed hither and thither on those perilous journeyings—ever straining with new and newer expansion the “continent” of that great heart—what, to him, measuring as man measures, were their joys or griefs, their falls or apostasies? The anxiety of the Churches was an unselfish anxiety. And therefore it was a Christian, a Christ-like anxiety. To be willing, like the common shepherds and bishops of souls, to “do his duty” to them (as the phrase is) and there leave it; to be able to resign with a calm acquiescence, even into God’s hands, the children with whom he had “travailed

in birth,¹” and to be sure that all would be well—this was not St. Paul’s idea of the Pastorate or of the Apostleship. I do not see that he takes any blame, here or elsewhere, for this “anxiety of the Churches.” It showed him to be the follower of Jesus Christ ; who, upon earth and in glory, is persecuted, enslaved, oppressed, tempted, in His “brethren” and in His “little ones.”²

When we seek to enter into St. Paul’s anxiety, some features of it strike us at once, but we doubt whether they are the chief.

St. Paul was strict, for example, in his government of the Churches. With what eagerness, both of authority and of argument, does he throw himself into questions even of dress!

¹ Gal. iv. 19.

² Matt. xxv. 35—45. Acts ix. 4.

How does he insist upon the principle, upon the right and wrong, of each regulation, and go back to the order of Creation, and to the order of Temptation, for a reason why woman should be veiled, why woman should be subject!¹ It is impossible to say for certain that St. Paul might not have entered with keen and stern interest into some of our own ritual controversies. His mind upon such topics we cannot even “guessingly” conceive of—always supposing that he had no reason to suspect the possibility, in such ceremonials, either of superstition or of self-righteousness. Of one thing we are certain—that he would have laid down, as it is now thought tyranny to do, the law of obedience; that he would have regarded it as mutiny in

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 3—16. Compare 1 Tim. ii. 13, 14.

Christ's army, for one private soldier or one non-commissioned officer to set up his roving fancy, or his questionable taste, or his one-sided doctrine, or his irritable conscience, against the orders of his commander, the wishes of his people, or the received customs of his Church. "What?" he would say, "came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only?¹" Certainly he would have taught the indifference, in themselves, of all externals: he would have felt the absolute nothingness of dress and posture, of ornament and decoration, in the face of questions which actually divide God's earth between Christ and the devil: he would have scorned the puerility, the senility, the double

¹ I Cor. xiv. 36: ἡ ἀφ' ὑμῶν ὁ λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐξηήλθεν, ἡ εἰς ὑμᾶς μόνους κατήντησεν;

dotage, of a so called Christianity divided (in such matters) against itself. "Sirs, ye are brethren!¹" why do ye thus "fight and war,"² thus "bite and devour one another,"³ a world of sin and infidelity looking on and mocking?

St. Paul, again, was peremptory in his enforcement of doctrine. "The anxiety of all the congregations," we see from many of his letters, was, in part, a doctrinal anxiety. Now that many of the particular controversies are for ever gone by—Judaism itself, alike in its persecution, its proselytizing, and its Judaizing, a thing of the past; and the special errors denounced to the Corinthians, to the Colossians, and to Timothy, put down and exterminated by the Fathers and Councils of seven centuries, as to

¹ Acts vii. 26.

² James iv. 2.

³ Gal. v. 15.

their original form and shape—we find it difficult to account to ourselves for the strength of St. Paul's words, save on the supposition of human feelings and natural impulses hard to reconcile with the received idea of a direct and an infallible Inspiration. And I think we do well to refrain for the most part from employing his particular weapons of warfare, in waging the doctrinal battles of our own generation. *He* was fighting for *Christ*. His task was, to settle for all time what Christ should be in His Churches. He saw that Judaism pure, and still more Judaism mixed and Christianized, was the enemy, essentially, of a "Christ all and in all."¹ He did His work, and rested. In language at least, all modern controversies, certainly the

¹ Col. iii. 11.

controversies of our day, assume St Paul's Gospel. No man would be listened to now who should say, "Something else, some one else—Circumcision, or Moses—must be added to Jesus Christ if you would be saved." It is in Christ, on the strength of Christ, that Christians now battle. Wrong or right, they all declare themselves to have Christ, the whole of Christ, and nothing but Christ, with them. They would abjure their own contention in a moment, if they thought it possible that they could be reasonably charged with disparaging or obscuring Him. Even in strifes about the Old Testament, much more in strifes about the two Sacraments, the supremacy of Christ is not impugned. It is but in question how much of Christ—of His Gospel, or of His Inspiration—there

is in Moses and the Prophets. It is but in question, how far it has pleased Him to connect Himself, as to His perpetual operations of grace, with two ordinances of His own acknowledged institution. And I dare to plead in behalf of all such questionings, that we have no certain warrant for applying to them, on either side, St Paul's vehement and unmeasured denunciations, whether of false brethren who "privily brought in" Judaism, or of heretical teachers who were covertly paving the way for Gnosticism.

I would to God that this distinction, if it be true, might be more carefully applied to the Church controversies of our time. "The anxiety of the Churches" has place, I do not deny it, in matters of doctrine. But that place is not in
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the enquiry, Where is Christ? but rather in the very different question, What is Christ? If Christ is indeed, to me, in reference to my salvation, the All in all; if I put no trust in anything that I do, or in anything that I am; if I shut out self from my creed, as much in its exaggerated self-consciousness as in its insidious self-righteousness, and receive Christ, in His Passion and in His Deity, as my one, one, one Hope; it shall not be a crime in me that I read in Scripture a less, or a more, as to the efficacy of a particular Service, or as to the peculiarity of His Presence in a certain Sacrament—you have no right to call me a Judaizer because I am a Sacramentalist, or a profane man because “the flesh profits me nothing.”¹ There is a doctrinal

¹ John vi. 63.

anxiety still—but it ends, in its intensity, where some would begin it.

St. Paul leaves us in no doubt—if this one passage were all—as to the nature of his chief anxiety for the Churches. “Who is weak,” he explains himself in the verse which follows, “and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?”

The strength of St. Paul lay, not so much in the width as in the individuality of his interest. It is true, he traversed sea and land in his journeyings. It is true, he made the world his Province, and treated Europe and Asia as two Counties or two Parishes of his Diocese. It is true, he surveyed earth and heaven from his prison, and embraced time and eternity within the scope of his contemplation. But all this, had

it stood alone, had failed to account for his influence upon Christendom. The anxiety of all the Churches was, for him, an individual anxiety. At Corinth, there was much to alarm him, in the form of error and disorder. He was himself injured and insulted there by cruel and wanton aspersions. His work seemed to be undone, his authority questioned, his motives suspected, his person ridiculed. He felt all this, keenly, sensitively, as a man, and as an Apostle. But *the* thing which distressed him was a single instance of immorality. That one scandal, that one sin—the sin more than the scandal—the sin against Jesus Christ—the sin against the sinner's own soul—it was that which wounded him at the very heart. See how he enters into the sinfulness of the sin—how he solemnly judges it—

how he hands over the corrupted soul to a mysterious discipline through which it may at last win salvation.¹ See how, in his next letter, he counsels, entreats, commands restoration—trembles lest the penitence should become despair—would heal the wound ere it festers—would defeat the “crafts” which ever follow the “assaults” of the tempter.² The Epistles are full of such individual dealing. He had always time for it. He never suffered the supposed interests of Churches to eclipse in his eyes the welfare of souls. It is a grand, a magnificent specimen of the Divine Father’s, the Divine Saviour’s, the Divine Spirit’s working. How dwells the Spirit in the corporate society, which is the Church of Jesus Christ? By dwelling in the individual

¹ 1 Cor. v. 1—5.

² 2 Cor. ii. 5—11.

member—by animating, quickening, moving, consecrating, the personal will, the personal action. The anxiety of all the Churches is, in like manner, the individual sympathy and the individual indignation. “Who is weak,” by reason of a defective apprehension of the liberty which is in Christ? ¹ “Who is weak,” for lack of energy of heart and hand in the conflict with temptation—or by reason of a life still clouded by memories of evil, and imperfectly emancipated as yet from the power of sin? “Who is weak, and I am not weak?” sharing his infirmity by a brotherly sympathy which makes me all tenderness, all compassion, all love? ² “Who is offended”—caused to stumble in the path of duty—led astray, by evil influence or ill ex-

¹ Rom. xiv. 1, 2. xv. 1. 1 Cor. viii. 7—12. ² 1 Cor. ix. 22.

ample, into the thing which he renounced at his Baptism—"who is offended, and I am not on fire?" The same love, which is sympathy with the weak, is indignation against the tempter. Christ Himself moves in the Christian, and stirs in the same soul the fire of His love and the fire of His jealousy.

Brethren! then only will the Church of this country and of this century be strong with Christ's strength, when it transfers its chiefest anxiety from conflicts of form to conflicts of spirit. There is a form of ritual, there is even a form of doctrine, for which our rulers might contend earnestly, and yet the life be gone out of them. We counsel no indifference about either. Obedience is a condition of service, and orthodoxy is a necessity of

ministry. But the question lies deeper. Is there in the inferior ministry, is there in the higher, a true care for souls? Is there a counting nothing too small, too single, too individual, to be worthy of the attention of the representative of Christ? I knew a Bishop, afterwards Primate, of this Church of England, who failed not, whatever his distance, whatever his advancement, whatever his occupation, to write at certain intervals to a common northern townsman whom he had been privileged personally to reclaim from habits of drunkenness, for his establishment and growth in grace—exemplifying, I have always thought, simply and beautifully, this saying of the Apostle, “Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?”

At a time of many anxieties—a time of eager excitement, keen contention, and bitter personal disappointments—I have dared to hope that it might not be unreasonable, that it might not even be without a blessing, to bring to your recollection, this morning, a life altogether above this life—a life “hidden in God,”¹ and “ready to be revealed in the last time.”² Whosoever is capable of that anxiety of which St. Paul’s heart was full, shall be lifted altogether above any other—yea, “though the waters roar and be troubled, and though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.”³ Let the disinterested care take possession—it shall expel, it shall eradicate, every other. Think of the great Name, of the great Kingdom,

¹ Col. iii. 3.² 1 Pet. i. 5.³ Psalm xlv. 3.

of the great Will, which is enthroned above this world, and which has for its aim the welfare, the happiness, the salvation of all men. Contemplate that magnificent work—wonderful that we can add, *and take part with it*. Let the anxiety of the Churches—which is, in other words, the anxiety of Christ Himself—agitate, stir, engross your being. To feel it is a token of life. To feel it is to be of one mind and one soul with Apostles and Evangelists, yea, with Christ Himself, in the very aim and purpose of the being. To feel it is to be raised at last into that higher realm, that indeed Presence of God, in which whosoever dwells has everlasting life—peace and joy now, hereafter “quietness and assurance for ever.”¹

¹ Isaiah xxxii. 17.

III.

THE SOLIDITY OF TRUE
RELIGION.

REVELATION XXI. 16.

THE LENGTH AND THE BREADTH AND THE HEIGHT
OF IT ARE EQUAL.

'PREACHED IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY AT A SPECIAL
AFTERNOON SERVICE, FEBRUARY 11, 1874, BEING
THE WEDNESDAY IN THE WEEK OF THE LONDON
MISSION.

THE SOLIDITY OF TRUE RELIGION.

THE figures of the Apocalypse are ideal, not pictorial. They are for the mind, not for the eye; for the poet, not for the painter. The great picture of the Adoration of the Lamb, though painted (it should seem) with loving, with adoring reverence, is painful rather than beautiful to the beholder, by reason of its combination of a multitude of incongruous images, each one of which singly, as the Seer drew it, was not for sight, but for study—not a scene, but a meditation.

As with that opening Vision, so is it with this the latest. St. John is called to behold “the Bride, the Lamb’s wife.” What he does behold

is a magnificent City, upon the description of which he lavishes all the wealth of Oriental and Prophetic imagery. Like the corresponding Vision of Ezekiel, it ceases to be God's Vision as soon as man's hand touches it. The verse from which the text is taken, if it stood alone, would be a sufficient protest against thus materializing the ideal. "The city lieth four-square, and the length is as large as the breadth. And he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal." A city wall fifteen hundred miles high cannot be for realization. The emblem is God's modelling: fix it, fashion it, stereotype it, and it is ugly, it is grotesque, it is monstrous—it is God's no more.

Many uses, many applications, of the figure, might be made with equal profit. The original idea of the City is apparently not so much what we call Heaven, but rather the Church in its glory. It is that aspect of the great world-wide Society which Christ our Lord was incarnate, was crucified, to incorporate, in which it shall hereafter be presented, when "the mystery of God is finished,"¹ and when "all the building fitly framed together" by the doctrine and the discipline of all these ages, shall have "grown into a holy temple," to be the everlasting "habitation of God through the Spirit."² The City itself is "the Bride, the Lamb's wife;" and each feature of the splendid Vision represents some characteristic of that spiritual Body in its eternal and glorious

¹ Rev. x. 7.

² Eph. ii. 21, 22.

consummation. If then I take one clause of the description of the glorified Church, and apply it to that "True Religion" which has carried her safely to her Heaven, I trust that I shall be doing no violence to the representation, but rather, if God will, shall have set it before you in one (at least) of many lights in which the Wisdom of the Artificer is justified of her children.

The word Religion, like the word Faith, is ambiguous. It is capable of two meanings. We speak of the Christian Religion, of our true and holy Religion, when we mean the Revelation which God gave in Christ, and the system of faith and practice which is built and founded upon it. We speak also of "Religion," sincere, or true, or genuine Religion, when we

mean the reflection of that Revelation in the heart and the life of him who receives it. In the brief words of this day's subject, "The Solidity of true Religion," the latter of these senses may be allowed to preponderate. Solidity is the opposite of all that is superficial, shallow, hollow, slight, visionary, evanescent, fugitive. It has the idea of something firm, real, compact, substantial ; something that can support weight, endure pressure, resist opposition, undergo examination ; something, therefore, when the word is applied to spiritual matters, which will not disappear, or vanish, or give way, when either tribulation or peril or temptation meets it ; something which will bear the brunt of adverse criticism, of inward misgiving, of difficult duty, of pain mental and bodily—nay, of that last trial of all, which is

before each one of us, the passing away, "flesh and heart failing,"¹ from all that is seen and known and experienced, into that mysterious state of being, which is death, and the having died.

The Solidity of true Religion is proved, above all else, by its being found equal to this strain, this wrench, this emergency, and this mystery. Religion is a solid, not a superficies: of it, as of the Church which it has brought safe to her glory, the saying is true, that it has its three dimensions, its cubic perfection—"The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal."

I. We begin with the last of these. For, without this, length might be a feeble extension,

¹ Psalm lxxiii. 26.

and breadth a perilous latitude. Height is the first thing. And here we must guard the word against a possible misconception. There was once a tower based upon earth, and of which the builders, as they raised tier above tier and story upon story, flattered themselves with the vain imagination that its top would at last reach heaven. Even such, in its pride and in its disappointment, is that Religion which rests upon man's "willing" or man's "running,"² upon human search or human effort, and not upon that which the Apocalypse, like all Scripture, makes characteristic of the true godliness, that "it comes down from God out of heaven,"³ first in the Revelation which informs, and then in the grace which realizes it. The conception

¹ Gen. xi. 4.

² Rom. ix. 16.

³ Rev. xxi. 2.

of St. John, in this Vision, is of a height, not attained from earth, but let down from Heaven.

Brethren ! the object of these Sermons—certainly of this Sermon—is practical, not polemical. When I choose for my topic “the Solidity of true Religion,” and when I speak first of its height—reminding you that it is the primary essential of true Religion, that it be the communication of man with God—and that that communication can only be by God speaking first, by God letting down to us the rope or the wire which is to connect us with, or attract us to, Himself—you perceive that my one wish is to make sure of your seeking salvation in the right way, as a thing which only God can give, only God can reveal, only God can communicate, as a knowledge first, and then a power. The

height of religion is its primary and its fundamental dimension.

There is nothing which lies so near the heart of true Religion, as its dealing with truth; truth, not in its sincerity alone, but in its reality. Truth is the thing which is. There are two opposites of truth—the thing which is insubstantial, and the thing which is false. You will say, and I will not dispute with you, That is a distinction without a difference. The definition of both these is non-being. But I bring the two separately before you, for the sake of saying, as I would most earnestly say, Beware of building upon that which, though it has a certain reality—inasmuch as thought is a reality, and feeling is a reality, and even emotion is a reality—yet has no security, no guarantee, for

its permanence. I can imagine a man deeply impressed with a sense of sin ; crying earnestly, "What must I do to be saved?"¹ hearing of Jesus, and finding in Him the very thing he needs ; giving himself thoroughly to Him, and going forth from that dedication a new man—and yet, to-morrow, or the morning after that, or (it may be) a month or a year later still, only able to refer himself to that inward change, that process inside him, as his one hope and his one plea with God. "Lord, did I not, on a certain day, see Jesus Christ, and give myself sincerely to Him? Lord, did I not find peace, and was I not washed and justified, that day, by reason of appropriating Jesus Christ? and is not that argument enough for the hour of death and for

¹ Acts xvi. 30.

the day of judgment?" He goes back, again and again, to that day, or that night, of quickened feeling, of heart-deep confession, of conscious forgiveness—and that is his plea at the bar of God.

Yet, all the time, that man's Religion may not, in my sense of the words, have "come down from God out of heaven." Even that Religion, though it is very self-prostrating and self-abasing in terms, is built upon earth. It rests upon something that has taken place inside you. I cannot say that it is twelve thousand furlongs, fifteen hundred miles, high! But, if it is, sure I am that it starts from earth—it is built upon earth—perhaps, peradventure, its top may reach heaven—but Oh! "perhaps" and "peradventure" are ill words to die upon!

My Religion must rest upon something outside me. It must be something which just lays hold upon a reality which would be as much so if I had never existed. If it has pleased God to tell me what He is; if it has pleased God to take the veil off from Himself; the veil (strange as it may be to say it) of spirit, the veil of naked verity, the veil of "excess of light," of too much, too absolute, reality; if it has pleased God to make Himself, thus inhabiting inaccessible light, visible and accessible in His Son my Lord—to roll off all my sins upon a Divine Person, made human for me, made a Sacrifice, made an Atonement, for me—to send forth into all the world, yet into hearts such as this heart, to change lives such as this life, a Holy and Blessed Spirit—both of whom, the Saviour and

the Spirit, as well as the Father, would just as much be, just as much be all in all to others, if this poor wretched speck and atom, the “I myself I,” had never suffered, and never sinned, and never so much as been—then, you perceive, there is “a Rock higher than I¹” for me to build upon: and if it should please God, this night, to give me a sensible conscious proof that I was penitent and justified and sanctified, it would not cause me for one moment to be either elated, or self-confident, or a despiser of others, because my whole rest and trust would be outside myself: and it would not shake my trust for one moment, if I should awake, to-morrow morning, what I was this morning, a fool and a sinner—because as such God has dealt with me,

¹ Psalm lxi. 2.

and because my Religion is all built and based upon something outside of me—something which is in Heaven first, and then comes down, by God's wonderful revelation, from God, out of heaven, to me.

Have I now explained the first dimension of the true Religion? how it is an echo, a response, to a fact, existing indestructibly and unalterably even though every man, and I amongst them, were an infidel, a hypocrite, a liar?

Brethren! I am bold to say, that everything in Religion is an evil, which brings self into prominence. Even if it be the religious self, the penitent self, the believing self, the wonderfully conscientious and diligent and pious self, yet the contemplation of it "cometh of evil."¹

¹ Matt. v. 37.

What we really want is to forget self. Anything which stimulates self-consciousness is an evil. I know there must be a dealing with God, in private, in secret, on the basis of His self-revelation. But O let it be very private—very secret! O let not the priest, as such, either make or meddle! If you are a daughter, let your mother—if you are a wife, let your husband—if you are a lone person, let it only be the priest because he is your friend—nay, alone, and unfriended, just come to God as you are, to Christ as you are, to the Holy Ghost as you are, and, all alone, touch Him, grasp Him, and live! There is no secret, mysterious, marked and mapped out, way of coming nor way of walking. True Religion is very grand and very high—trust it not with any one save the Father!

The first dimension of this solid is height. It is another name for depth. Yes, God and man—God and the soul—God and the life—this is Religion. God speaks, and man answers. God reveals, and the soul responds. God guides, and the life obeys. This is my “Mission!” Stand not aloof, I say, from the living God! It is death—it is hell—to be apart from the Fountain of being! He has spoken—listen! He has let down from the high and holy Heaven the chain of a more than electric intercourse—use it! Let “the day of your espousals¹” be telegraphed in Heaven! Revelation is the message—and devotion is the reply!

2. From the height we pass to the breadth.

And here, do not expect me to sing the praises

¹ Cant. iii. 11. Jer. ii. 2.

of latitude, in its earth-sprung and earth-bounded meaning. I am not here to tell you that all Creeds and all Religions are equally valuable, equally availing, if they be but sincere. "In every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him¹"—but for *what* accepted? To be let alone? To be told that devout Judaism, that sincere heathenism, are enough for salvation? Nay, let the context of those words teach us a truer lesson. Cornelius, devout, and charitable, and earnest, is accepted to be the first Gentile within the pale of Christ's Church.

Even so now. "To him that hath shall be given²"—but God gives not to the sincere man that fatal, that deadly gift, that he shall be pro-

¹ Acts x. 35.

² Matt. xiii. 12.

nounced to "have all, and abound." God takes him that He may teach, that He may bless, and that He may save.

The breadth of the Gospel city is no compliment, and no toleration, and no latitude. It is *this*.

First of all, that it is absolutely free to all comers. No colour of the skin—no rank, or age, or nation—no ignorance, and no education—no privilege of Church or Creed—none of these have any place in true Religion, or in God's will to bestow it. There is not a disposition, and there is not an intellect, and there is not a soul, for which Jesus Christ has not room. If any one says that this nation is Christian because it belongs to the higher humanity, and that that nation is outside the Gospel because it is intel-

lectually degraded—or perhaps (for in these days *all* scoffs are vented) just the other way, and for the opposite reason—he lies. Christ has specimens of all men inside His Church—and I would to God that this Week of Missions might be utilized for Foreign Missions, for awakening the sleeping heart of the Church to compassion and to enterprise for nations lying still in darkness and the shadow of death.

But what I specially mean now by breadth is not even this. I would remind you how the solidity of true Religion is shown in the breadth of its influence upon the individual humanity. Has it been your lot to possess a friend—a friend dear to you as your soul, yet at one period of your friendship not religious, not a Christian, save in name, and by despised Bap-

tism? And have you lived to see him set on fire by the Gospel? Have you marked the influence—I had almost said, the contagion and the conflagration—which was set to work in him by believing in Christ with the heart? You can form a good idea of the thing intended by this second dimension of true Religion. It is an evil thing, and but too common, to hear men speak of the soul, their own or another's, as if it were a sort of separate person inside them, having its own interests, its own anxieties, its own perils, its own subjects and objects, quite apart from other portions of the great complex being. A soul that has its own books, its own conversation, and its own one day in seven, is as little aware of the breadth of Religion as it is of the grandeur of the God who gave it. The

breadth and the height are equal, and each is twelve thousand furlongs, fifteen hundred miles!

It is a true parable. I cannot bear to hear religious people run down intellect. What should we be without it even in the things of God? Intellect is the first thing in us which God appeals to. Before we can believe, there must be understanding. "I will (even) pray," St. Paul says, "with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also.¹" We must apprehend, if we cannot comprehend, the thing which God says, before we can so much as feel it or pray it. And when I find myself day by day surrounded with wonders, in Nature and Providence, which I can scarcely move

¹ 1 Cor. xiv. 15.

amongst or live under — and when I find myself day after day puzzled by this and that, in God's Word, which I lack the knowledge, yes, the intellectual, or the historical, or the linguistic, or the psychological knowledge, to enable me to enter into or to profit by —and scarcely less, when I find in religious books and in religious people so much that is weak and fanciful and silly, just for lack of a trained and informed and cultivated understanding—I cannot sympathize with that depreciation or that mortification of intellect, which some make an endeavour, or an attainment, or a grace—I would give all I possess to know more—I can echo that sentence, if no other, in St. Paul's Epistles, which makes it a definite prospect, in the next world, for the

Christian, that then he "shall know, even as here he was known.¹"

Meanwhile the intellect itself does grow apace, if men will have it so, under the tuition of Religion. Men who were regarded in early youth as dull and inapprehensive have been acknowledged, in a Christian manhood, as strikingly, wonderfully, intelligent. The heart has educated the head—the fire of grace has spread laterally through the being—and "the children of wisdom²" mark and admire and glory in the evidence.

But while the disparagement of intellect is one danger—the religious world (as it would be called) shrinking into itself at the first mention of critical or literary or philosophical handling,

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

² Matt. xi. 19.

and quoting text after text to show that human ignorance is Divine wisdom, and that "the preaching of the cross" ought to be "foolishness"¹—there is another peril, on the opposite side, to the "breadth" of Christianity—and that lies in the contemptuous treatment of feeling as a part of it. One would suppose, to read or to listen in this particular week, that the chief foe of Religion was an excessive enthusiasm. Warnings, serious and solemn, echo in our ears all the day long, against an excitement, an emotion, a fever-heat of feeling, which is sure afterwards to rebound into indifference, or, if it does not that, will be but so much the more formidable in its effect upon a sober and substantial Christianity. Far be it from us to say that there exists

¹ 1 Cor. i. 18.

no such possibility. But this we can say—that our experience has not lain amongst the too much, or the too fervid, or the too emotional, in Religion. Judging by ourselves, and by those with whom we dwell in most intimate converse, we should say rather that we should hail an accession of fervour as an almost unmingled blessing. We do not feel inclined to refuse the breath of a more genial, a more balmy, a more odorous gale, merely because it might pass again, and leave us in the double chill of a more Arctic winter. I should like to hear, but for once, the voice of God, the call of Jesus Christ—I do not think I could be the worse for it! If only I may be permitted not to build upon it, not to make it my hope of Heaven, nor my plea with God, afterwards—if only I may be

clearly taught that it has nothing to do, this way or that way, with the real rock, with the solid fastness, with the impregnable citadel, of Revelation—that I am not to depend, for one moment, upon feeling—no, not if I were even caught up, like St. Paul, to “hear unspeakable words” in “the third heaven¹”—I cannot think that I could ever regret or ever repent of an experience, for myself, of the “breadth” of the Gospel, in that it recognizes feeling, emotion, enthusiasm, as one of its provinces, and scarcely stays to settle the exact rank and order of feeling, amidst the multitude of its subjects and of its tributaries.

3. “The height and the breadth and the length of it are equal.” What are twelve

¹ 2 Cor. xii. 2, 4.

thousand furlongs, what are fifteen hundred miles, as the parabolical measurement of the "length" of true Religion?

I will speak of this "length" in the simplest and most practical way. It is also perhaps the most instructive and the most impressive.

(1) True Religion has to last a whole lifetime.

It is the fashion to say that life is short. Do you find it so? Is it but "the other day" that you left the Nursery, or left School—entered your Profession, or made yourself a Home? Certainly the *inner* life is not short, to the man himself. These habits (as we call them) of feeling and action—these habits, alas! of neglect and sinning—are they of yesterday? At certain moments, in certain lights, life may look brief

—but I believe that the opposite experience is yours and mine—How long it is since I was born ! how shall I get safely through these years that remain to me ?

The solidity of true Religion is shown not least in this—that it is long-lived. It must, if it is to be worth anything—it can, if it is real—carry a man safely through this long life.

We see at once how absolutely nothing, in this view, becomes a sigh, a tear, a regret, a wish, a sudden cry for mercy, a general confession of sin, or a momentary panic under the recollection of a wrath to come. In whatever way the work of God may begin, it has to last us a life-time, or it is nothing. See then the conditions.

Eternal truth must be its basis. Some thing,

some Person, that cannot perish, over which, over whom, death has no power—this is indispensable. Of course, if this be—if there is a real Existence outside mine, and an offer, on the part of that real Existence, to take mine inside it, so that I shall be while it is, partaking alike of its permanence and its satisfaction—there is the starting-point secured for a length of twelve thousand times twelve thousand furlongs! And you see now why we press so earnestly this first condition. Creature life can only last in Creator life. “I am the Lord ; I change not : therefore ye sons of Adam are not consumed.¹” Build upon a feeling—and you are still in the region of the perishable. Build upon a thought, build upon an argument,

¹ See Mal. iii. 6.

build upon a philosophy—and you are still in the region of the perishable. Build upon a Person—that Person being of necessity, and being for ever—and you are at the door of permanence, of infinity, at once, may you but be let in.

Therefore the second condition is—a connection given, assured, apprehended, with this Person. If God has really sent word to us, by One who proved Himself Divine, “I am thy Father—not by thy making, but by mine—this relationship has nothing to do with merit or congruity or volition of thine—still remains, even if thou be a prodigal son wasting my goods in a far country—can be claimed at any moment, even in the far country, by the cry, ‘Father, I have sinned’¹—is a sure passport

¹ Luke xv. 18.

into the Home, with its comfort, and its abundance, and its security"—if all this be so, then the permanence is absolutely guaranteed: nothing but a second apostasy, nothing but a second free-will exile, nothing but a self-abandonment for the second time to the life of shame and penury and anguish, can ever cut short the home-stay, or put any limit or any boundary to the duration of the blessedness. The Religion which is feeling, the Religion which is opinion, the Religion which is doctrine, the Religion which is will or effort or aspiration, may cease and determine. But the Religion which is the heart's response to a Revelation—the Religion which is sonship—the Religion which is companionship—the Religion which is God in us, through His Son, by His Spirit—this has no

end : this is but rooted and grounded by time,
this is but crowned and glorified by eternity.

“The length and the height are equal.”

(2) We have anticipated the last word. That mysterious name, so full, yet so empty—that mysterious idea, approached only by negatives, or else by the agglomeration of quantities and masses of human time, if so be, by any means, we may reach the inaccessible and grasp the incomprehensible—ETERNITY—is before each one of us.

“Eternity! Eternity!

“How long art thou, Eternity!”

Yet into it we are hurrying, and through it we must live. Is true Religion long enough in its “length” to carry us thither, to support us there? Yes, if it be a sonship, if it be a friendship, if it

be a love—it is! it is! Do we weary of the society of the loved one? Do we find it insupportable to be shut up to the society of the one only beloved? Does time pass slowly in that presence? Would it shoot a pang through the true heart, to be told that change was impossible, that the arch-separater Death had received, for them two, his death-wound? Neither shall it be a reason why true Religion lacks the dimension of “length,” to know that the Presence into which it ushers us is an everlasting Presence. That there we shall find “an innumerable company¹”—Angels, ministering spirits, souls of the righteous—lost ones regained, and buried treasures recovered, and hearts, loved as our own, there reknit in perpetual love—*this* shall not

¹ Heb. xii. 22, 23.

satisfy the once "out-poured in us" love of God!¹ To see HIM—to behold His glory—to be occupied in inexhaustible discoveries and intuitions of Himself, as all beauty and all love—this shall be our Heaven! This shall make it bright for us with perpetual light, and home-like by reason of the Father's presence! Then shall we see—we to whom God gives His grace, not of instantaneous salvation, but of indefatigable perseverance—that true Religion was strong, was solid, was indestructible—"the length and the breadth and the height of it were equal!"

¹ See Rom. v. 5: *ὅτι ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐκκέχυται ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν.*

IV.

THE MEANING OF A MISSION.

LUKE XVIII. 36.

AND HEARING THE MULTITUDE PASS BY, HE ASKED
WHAT IT MEANT.

PREACHED IN THE TEMPLE CHURCH, ON SUNDAY,
FEBRUARY 15, BEING THE DAY AFTER THE CLOSE
OF THE MISSION WEEK.

THE MEANING OF A MISSION.

HE sat there, blind and helpless—an outsider, altogether, to Christ and the Gospel. He merely heard that most impressive, most solemn sound, a passing multitude, and he asked what is meant.

The rest of his story is told in the verses which follow: and it is all so parabolical, so doctrinal, so practical (like all doctrine) in its details, that we will not suffer it to pass us by, in the brief meditation to which I invite you upon this day's Gospel.

We have passed through a remarkable week, whatever we may have thought of it. There

have been various opinions, and expressions of opinion, upon the wisdom, upon the prudence, upon the probable results and consequences, of the whole thing. Many of us have been almost entirely lookers-on—anxious for information, anxious for knowledge, anxious for facts, upon which to form a sound judgment, as to the duty of Laymen and Clergymen in reference to the future treatment of this new activity of our times. I do not think that we yet possess such knowledge as to the experiences of the past week. It must take time to ascertain the facts, and much more time to estimate the results. It is scarcely probable that in this Temple Church, so peculiar alike in its ecclesiastical position and in the nature of its Congregation, it will ever be necessary to entertain the practical question of

the propriety of what is now understood by "holding a Mission." None the less but even the more desirable does it appear, that we should learn something for our own instruction, as worshippers and as a Congregation, from a movement which has attracted the attention not of the Church only but of the world. "Hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant." It did not seem likely that it could affect him: but curiosity alone made it natural that he should ask what unwonted occurrence was thus stirring the surface of his usually calm and monotonous life. And in asking that question good came to him. Came in a form not looked for, but which had in it, for him, the removal of a life's misery, and the communication of an unspeakable joy.

The first and most distant view of the Mission Week just ended, will be this :—

There are a multitude of men—some of them distinguished for intellect and education—many of them persons of independent position and entire freedom to please themselves as to their manner of life—more of them men full of employments, and as little inclined as any of us would be to add to these a further burden of care and toil, of opposition and obloquy and ridicule—most of them persons with all the life in them which others use first in selfish getting and then in selfish spending—there are a multitude of men, who, nevertheless, notwithstanding all these natural hindrances, feel so deeply what they conceive to be the dangerous condition of their fellow-creatures in the prospect of death,

judgment, and eternity, that they have united in one intense effort to benefit, to bless, to save them. They have undergone, in this effort, an amount of labour, self-denial, and self-sacrifice, during these eight days, which few men would submit to for any personal gain or personal advancement whatsoever. What an indifferent spectator calmly calls a "failure"—and such failures, doubtless, there are everywhere and in all things—and not least in these spiritual endeavours, which lie out of sight, and out of calculation, and out of human control—each separate failure is acute suffering to these combatants. They go back, we doubt not, to their chamber, to accuse themselves as the cause of it, and to pray God, "with strong crying and tears,"¹

¹ Heb. v. 7.

however else He may see fit to punish them, not to punish them in their ministry.¹ That they exercise their difficult office in the eyes of men—that they are, in a certain sense, at the mercy of the Press, to write them up or to write them down, the English Public indolently accepting and blindly following the lead of anonymous and (in a religious sense) often very “blind guides”—this is not that which distresses or harasses the spirits and souls of these good and brave men. It is this rather—that they conceive themselves responsible to God for this ministry, and are persuaded that each failure in it is the loss, or at least the damage, of a soul dear to them, for Christ’s sake, as their own.

¹ George Herbert.

Now it is quite possible that their whole idea of the way to win souls is faulty or ill-judging. We are not assuming that a Mission is the right way of pursuing the object, nor that any Mission of which we have yet had experience has not had in it many flaws, many errors, and perhaps some follies. We are only setting plainly and honestly before ourselves the fact, which cannot be disputed, that there is this zeal and this self-devotion in the hearts of a multitude of men, and that on hearing the multitude pass by, this is the first thought which we ought to entertain. Right or wrong, these men have an object: they live for it: and it is, in their own strong words, the salvation of imperilled souls.

For ourselves, it is far more important to ask whether the object is real, than whether the

method is wise. And here we are struck by this phenomenon—that these men are only realizing what all Christians say. The Church doctrines, of Sin and Holiness, of Repentance and Forgiveness, of Incarnation and Atonement, of Justification and Judgment, of Heaven and Eternity, go quite as far, in word and language, as the most earnest and enthusiastic of these men. If we are real Christians, if we are orthodox Churchmen, we cannot but admit that the soul that sins on must die, that Christ is the Saviour of sinners, that men must come to Him if they would have life, and that the hearing must precede the believing, and that the ministerial sending is the ordinary condition of the personal hearing. And it would be a mere closing of the ear against known facts, if we were to

cherish the imagination that all London has personally heard, or that all who have personally heard the Gospel are indeed walking in the light of it. We cannot then gainsay the want of something beyond what we have, both to reach the spiritually destitute, and to quicken the spiritually dead.

Ought we then, as Christians, as Churchmen, to be "extreme to mark" that which is unwise, or injudicious, or irregular, in an effort which we cannot consistently call unnecessary or superfluous? Ought not we, who desire not to "rejoice in iniquity" but to "rejoice with the truth,"¹ at least to wish well to, if we do not take part in, any earnest endeavour to make Jesus

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 6 : οὐ χαίρει ἐπὶ τῇ ἀδικίᾳ, συγχαίρει δὲ τῇ ἀληθείᾳ.

Christ, in His love and in His power, pass within hearing, within reach, within touch, of our blind and of our lost? Can it be any matter of self-gratulation upon our superior sense or foresight, to find that in any one spot or on the whole, such an effort as this has been a failure? Can we be the richer for the poverty of others, or the wiser for their credulity or their fanaticism?

It is indeed open to each one of us to exercise, as in the sight of God, a careful and well-informed judgment upon the particular instrumentality employed.

We may feel that there is too much of the Clergyman, of the Priest, in all this Mission; too much of the obtrusion, the almost forcing, of the Adviser and the Director upon the

thoughts and prayers of the worshippers ; too much of the solicitation to accept his offices in helping them into the Divine Presence ; too little of the entreaty rather to go alone if they can—to be assured of the nearness of the mercy-seat, and of the facility of the step across the threshold of the Most Holy.

Or we may doubt whether the anxiety to place the whole enterprise under the control and oversight of a central authority, and thus to claim for it a sort of position inside the regular machinery of the Church, was not calculated, rather, to lose for it that which was its strength—namely, the appearance, and the reality, of an earnest yearning of the individual Pastor's soul over the souls of his people—

expressing itself, not by rule and measure, but in free generous outburst beyond the fence of Rubrics and Liturgies and printed devotions.

Or we may question the wisdom of attempting to include so vast an area as that of London and her suburbs, for such a purpose, in one gigantic organization. Where, we might ask, are the men to be found, by the hundred and the thousand, capable, physically, mentally, spiritually, of so formidable an exertion? We may feel that a more scattered, a less concentrated action is more likely, in so peculiar and exceptional an experiment, to secure the good without incurring the evil. We may be allowed to think that a simultaneousness which cannot really be union—which rather brings to the surface all manner of differences—and which also

makes the standing aloof (however conscientious) painful, suspected, and, in appearance at least, even insubordinate—is a loss rather than a gain to the desired harvest of profiting. We may venture even to doubt whether there may not be something of carnal rather than spiritual reckoning, in that notion of the special value of vast combinations for prayer and intercession, which seems almost to make our own estimate God's estimate, alike of time and place and number. "Wherever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them"¹—the warrant for congregational worship is express and certain. But I do not know that I read in those words the sanction of that more modern conception, that a union in

¹ Matt. xviii. 20.

one hour, or one spot, or one utterance, is of more weight or "greater price" in the sight of Him to whom all time is "Now" and all space "Here," than a prayer equally earnest, rising from many several gatherings of the Divinely invited "two or three."

All these are at least open questions, and we claim great liberty, great latitude, in considering them. We cannot submit to be dictated to, or ordered about, or prescribed for, in this new, perfectly new, ordinance of "Missions." The wisest are they who first enquire, then weigh, then judge.

But about one thing there can be no doubt—and it is the fact from which we started—that the motive power of all this new work is the conviction, in a multitude of minds, of the

value and of the peril of souls; and the devotion, in a multitude of lives, of time and toil and thought to the work of seeking them.

Brethren! it is this which I would ponder with you. I see not how we can doubt their premise, without discarding the Gospel. Did Christ die in vain? Did He come to leave us in our sins? Did He merely go through a form of reconciliation, which was to involve no consequence beyond that of lulling and pacifying? Was it, in plain terms, to make sin safer, to make conscience less imperious, to make law lighter, and to place existence, here and hereafter, on an easier, a more self-satisfied footing? If not—and no one says it—no one dares to breathe in words that notion, which yet may be in his heart, of a nominal conventional religion,

like that expressed in the searching record of the Old Testament, "They feared the Lord, and served their own gods¹"—if all consciences say, when they are asked, This is not religion—then the voice of the multitude passing by, all last week, from early dawn till late midnight, to their Prayers, to their Sacraments, to their Sermons, to their "Instructions," to their Vestries, perhaps to their Confessionals, must tell us, unanswerably, when we ask what it means, "It means that you, you personally, you individually, have a soul—and that that soul has one only Saviour—and that perhaps, perhaps, it has not yet found Him!"

He asked what it meant, and he found that it was Jesus passing by.

¹ 2 Kings xvii. 33.

Jesus—with that retinue of human beings which ever accompanies His progresses on this earth which He made and which He understands.

Is not all life this—a passing of Jesus Christ along its streets and through its chambers? Is not circumstance this? Is not Providence this? Is not conscience this? Is not experience, is not Scripture, is not worship this? Jesus passing by. Not abiding—always in movement: to be apprehended, to be arrested, to be accosted, on the instant—or else, perhaps, never!

He has been passing by you this week. You went to your business, and it occupied you—you read your newspaper, and it assured you that it was all illusion. Jesus was not there—not in the Mission: it was all fancy—at best, enthusiasm: you need not mind it! Jesus was

not there—only a few simpletons, playing at souls—amusing themselves with words, “strong but of little meaning!”

Yet, for all that, Jesus was there—and the world begins to acknowledge it. He is indeed everywhere where His servants are. If men believe, if men pray, if men work for Him, He is there: only He is not staying, He is only passing—and you must be quick!

Is this excitement? Is this feverish, fantastic, fanatical talk? I do not think so. For sure I am that “God our Saviour will have all men to be saved,¹” and I think that He uses all instrumentalities—none look perfect from the holy heavens—to work out His beneficent will.

When the blind man cried for mercy, we read

¹ 1 Tim. ii. 4.

that many, even of the attendants and precursors of Jesus, rebuked him. Why should he interrupt the onward march of Israel's Prophet and Israel's King? Why should he obtrude his little inconveniences—blindness itself looks small to the seeing—upon One who had earth and heaven on His hands? How could he expect individual care, individual attention?

What a parable! The sagacious ones of earth are always humble in their sentiments for others. What are your sorrows, and yours, and yours, in comparison with laws which guide systems, and interests which have an intrinsic importance? Little does the world know of an Omnipotence which involves Omniscience, and of a care for universes wrought out in the manipulation of atoms!

But the man in whom the work of God is begun heeds not these advices. Men may tell him, "You want not Jesus, or He heeds not you—you are too good to require—or you are too bad to deserve—His separate notice"—but he "cries so much the more"—yes, there is nothing more stimulating to grace than the contempt of nature—he "cries so much the more, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me!"

And He who rules all things—"in whom all things consist"¹—who has suns and stars to propel and regulate—without whom Nature herself would become in one moment a wreck and a chaos—He has always time to attend to distress, though it be but the sorrow of "the

¹ Col. i. 17 : τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν.

poor destitute,¹" or the cry of "the beggar from the dunghill."²

This only must He have of thee—the reality, not the idea—the particularity, not the generality—of thy need. "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" Is the answer ready? Lord, my blindness! Lord, my unbelief! Lord, my wicked, my incredible ingratitude! Lord, my crippled, palsied, mortified limbs, that will not "run the way of Thy commandments!"³

So bringing to Him every want and every sorrow—most of all, those sorrows that will not feel—most of all, those wants which try to say, "I have need of nothing"⁴—that particular blindness which is the simulation of sight, that

¹ Psalm cii. 17.

³ Psalm cxix. 32.

² Psalm cxiii. 7.

⁴ Rev. iii. 17.

special paralysis which imagines itself activity—you shall find, day by day, not enough for enjoyment, yet enough for salvation, that grace which is “prevalent in self-despair,” that strength which “is made perfect in weakness.”¹

Brethren! it is not without special significance that funeral music has been in our ears to-day, reminding us of the departure of one who loved this “House” tenderly, and who was, himself, one of its honoured heads and rulers. A man of extraordinary Academical promise; a scholar spoken of by his contemporaries at Oxford as one of the two best educated men—you can almost guess the other—in his University gener-

¹ 2 Cor. xii. 9.

ation ; a diligent servant of the State, in offices not of prominence, but of labour ; a man of deeds more than of words, and of thoughts larger and wiser and higher than either ; a man veiling, rather than vaunting, alike his great powers and his warm affections—has passed from the midst of us, scarce yet in the fulness of his years, and we mourn him and would make mention of him to-day. He belonged to that order of true and real men—would to God there were more of them—who are not for show but for use ; who scramble not for place or title, but do an unobtrusive work well, cultivate intellect not for its emoluments but for its blessings, “occupy” the assigned “talent” faithfully, and leave a sorrowful blank behind them in their home. May we, when our call comes, leave behind us as honour-

able, as pure a memory—as large a place in the hearts of those who survive—as good an example to those who come after, of a life lived in the fear of God and in the hope of a world to come!

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